

THE MAN IN THE PIPE

The man in the pipe knows the meaning of narrow and round. After lying still for hours, he believes he is buried. His fears are shoveled dirt and rising water; darkness he already has. The light at the end of the tunnel is not a Vietnam joke to him. He slithers more than crawls: snake or eel, he would do well to grow scales. His children will do this better. In time the pipe will seem almost as wide as a tunnel carved for insistent cars. Evolution is more truth than beauty; unless they swerve, the cars sense nothing of the walls.

CLOSET CHILD

Though I am locked in, my life is not soundproof. I can still hear voices and footsteps through the door. There was a time when I knew the source of each voice. Whether or not I knew the words did not matter. Tone, after all, is important. Long ago I recognized the footsteps. I knew the shape and color of the shoes before that. Now I understand only the lights and the hand that feeds me. Although this room is cleaned while I sleep, I am not touched. But I am clean. The room and I are one. When the debris of a day or week is taken I feel my body grow light. This life is privilege. Like the huge beasts in a public cage, I am still master. I need only to roar to believe it. The hand does not appear; the lights go out. They are driven by the terror that pushes crowds back from the bars. If they knew my secret, they would envy me; if I could explain it, they might bow and enter, sitting with me and howling to keep themselves sealed and dark.

-- Gary Fincke

Le Roy NY

INDIAN SUMMER MADONNA

unexpectedly hot
but she doesn't stay

KALEIDOSCOPE MADONNA

never gives you
the same shake
twice